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Head in the Ceiling

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Marsha Lovell
Delta, Utah
November 2018

“Head in the Ceiling”
Occupational Folklore: Work Pranks

Informant:

Marsha was very excited to share her pranks with us that she was giddy. Marsha has a soft spoken voice. She used her free hand to wave in little motions as she shared her pants prank. She laughed a lot while she told the prank. Sometimes she had a hard time talking because she was laughing too hard. Marsha has a tendency to start laughing before she gets the punch line out. She doesn't give a whole lot of detail in her stories. After she tells a prank she will sometimes wait for you to laugh or to make sure you appreciate her story. Marsha doesn't talk a whole lot normally, but when she talks about her pranks she lights up and is happy and perky while she talks.

Context:

I asked Marsha if she would be willing to tell Trevor and I some of her pranks she has done. She was so excited to share that she typed up a list of pranks that she had done so she wouldn't forget one. She listed them in order: high school pranks, college pranks, first married pranks, pranks on neighbors, and work pranks. I had her mostly focus on telling Trevor because I knew I had heard some of them before and I hoped that if she talked to Trevor who hadn't ever heard her pranks than she would give a bit more detail than she would have with me. Since I asked her to tell us the pranks it was a little more formal and not in a natural context. Normally these pranks would be told if other people were already talking about pranks. Marsha sat across from my husband Trevor, and I on the couches in the family room of her home. She held her paper that listed her pranks and she began in order. I wrote down one of her more funny pranks. This prank is from the work pranks category. This story takes place in the Delta Elementary School main office.

Text:

Marsha: “There was a missing tile in the ceiling in the bathroom, so we put a fake head up there and several people got startled, but the best was the school nurse came in on the weekend and she was in there by herself [She starts laughing as she talks] and she went to the bathroom and got really scared.” [We laugh]

Breanna: “Didn't she get mad at you guys the next day?”

M: [She giggles] “Yeah. The end.”

Texture:

Marsha was very excited to share her pranks with us that she was giddy. Marsha has a soft spoken voice. She used her free hand to wave in little motions as she shared her pants prank. She laughed a lot while she told the prank. Sometimes she had a hard time talking because she was laughing too hard. Marsha has a tendency to start laughing before she gets the punch line out. She doesn't give a whole lot of detail in her stories. After she tells a prank she will sometimes wait for you to laugh or to make sure you appreciate her story. Marsha doesn't talk a whole lot normally, but when she talks about her pranks she lights up and is happy and perky while she talks. This story she didn't tell with as much enthusiasm as she did with other pranks. So I don't think this is quite her favorite, but I think it was mostly because she told multiple stories in a row. I have heard her tell this story before and she tells it with more detail and enthusiasm.

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Utah State University
Introduction to Folklore
Dr. Lynne S. McNeill
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